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Testimony by: Jill Fritz

In Support of: SB 423 and SB 424

Committee: Senate Agriculture

Date: June 14, 2012

The Humane Society of the United States (HSUS), the nation's largest animal protection organization with over 11 million members and constituents—including more than 415,000 in Michigan—supports the passage of SB 423 and SB 424.

One of the most critical responsibilities of those in the animal care and sheltering field is to provide the most humane death possible for dogs and cats when euthanasia is necessary. The term "euthanasia" is derived from Greek, meaning "good death." To be humane, every euthanasia technique must result in painless unconsciousness, followed by respiratory, then cardiac arrest, and ultimately death. Carbon monoxide and carbon dioxide, whether produced from dry ice or generated from any other method, are not acceptable methods of euthanasia for dogs and cats.

The many limitations of carbon monoxide make the method less practical, considerably slower, and more expensive than lethal injection. Old, sick, or injured animals may have poor blood pressure or weak hearts, which may delay the effects of carbon monoxide, causing them to experience distress prior to unconsciousness. Animals under the age of four months may not have the lung capacity to inhale enough carbon monoxide to be effective.

Carbon monoxide is also a danger to those in the animal care and sheltering field. It is a hazardous substance: it is highly toxic and has no odor, no color, and no taste. It is one of the leading causes of accidental poisoning in the United States and repeated exposure to carbon monoxide, even at low levels, can result in long-term effects, including (but not limited to) impaired memory, breathing difficulties, muscle weakness, heart irregularity, and brain damage. Exposure among pregnant women can cause low birth weight in their infants.

We thank Senators Jones and Bieda for introducing this humane legislation, and we urge its support by Michigan legislators.

Jill Fritz

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